



**Billing Code 4310–55**

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

**[FWS–R3–R–2012–N120; FXRS1265030000–134–FF03R06000]**

**Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, Authorized Within the Twenty Counties That Lie Along the Missouri River from Kansas City to St. Louis, MO; Draft Environmental Assessment and Comprehensive Conservation Plan**

**AGENCY:** Fish and Wildlife Service, Interior.

**ACTION:** Notice of availability; request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** We, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service), announce the availability of a draft environmental assessment (EA) and comprehensive conservation plan (CCP) for Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge (Refuge, NFWR) for public review and comment. In this draft EA/CCP we describe how we propose to manage the refuge for the next 15 years.

**DATES:** To ensure consideration, we must receive your written comments by [INSERT DATE 30 DAYS AFTER DATE OF PUBLICATION IN THE FEDERAL REGISTER]. We will hold several open house–style meetings during the comment period to receive comments and provide information on the draft plan. In addition, we will use special mailings, newspaper articles, internet postings, and other media announcements to inform people of opportunities for input.

**ADDRESSES:** Send your comments or requests for more information by any one of the following methods:

- *E-mail:* r3planning@fws.gov. Include “Big Muddy Draft EA/CCP” in the subject line of the message.
- *Fax:* Attention: Refuge Manager, 573–876–1839.
- *U.S. Mail:* Attention: Refuge Manager Tom Bell, Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, 4200 New Haven Road, Columbia, MO 65201.
- *In-Person Drop Off:* You may drop off comments during regular business hours at the above address.

You will find the draft EA/CCP, as well as information about the planning process and a summary of the CCP, on the planning web site:

<http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/bigmuddycap/index.html>.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** Tom Bell, 573–876–1826.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:**

### **Introduction**

With this notice, we continue the CCP process for Big Muddy National Fish and Wildlife Refuge, which we began by publishing a notice of intent in the Federal Register (72 FR 27587) on May 16, 2007. For more about the initial process and the history of this refuge, see that notice.

### **Background**

The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act of 1966, as amended by the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd–668ee) (Administration Act), requires us to develop a CCP for each national wildlife refuge. The purpose in developing a CCP is to provide refuge managers with a 15-year strategy for achieving refuge purposes and contributing toward the mission of the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), consistent with sound principles of fish and wildlife management, conservation, legal mandates, and Service policies. In addition to outlining broad management direction on conserving wildlife and their habitats, CCPs identify wildlife-dependent recreational opportunities available to the public, including opportunities for hunting, fishing, wildlife observation and photography, and environmental education and interpretation. We will review and update the CCP at least every 15 years in accordance with the Administration Act.

Each unit of the NWRS was established for specific purposes. We use these purposes as the foundation for developing and prioritizing the management goals and objectives for

each refuge within the NWRS mission, and to determine how the public can use each refuge. The planning process is a way for us and the public to evaluate management goals and objectives that will ensure the best possible approach to wildlife, plant, and habitat conservation, while providing for wildlife-dependent recreation opportunities that are compatible with each refuge's establishing purposes and the mission of the NWRS.

### **Additional Information**

The draft EA/CCP, which includes detailed information about the planning process, refuge, issues, and management alternatives considered and proposed, may be found at <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/planning/bigmuddyccp/index.html>.

### **Public Involvement**

We will give the public an opportunity to provide input at a public meeting. You can obtain the schedule from the address or web site listed in this notice (see **ADDRESSES**). You may also submit comments anytime during the comment period.

### **Public Availability of Comments**

Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, you should be aware that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.

**Thomas O. Melius,  
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Midwest Region,  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.**

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